Learning Scenario 1

Slow Looking Tours in Heritage sites combined with mindful Art Making session

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of their community (Article 27, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights).
Heritage Ireland 2030 strategy recognises that cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past that form the bedrock of a country's identity. These resources have an intrinsic role in the well-being of individuals and society.

AIDA slow looking tours and activities offer meaningful engagement with heritage, arts and culture in a way that is accessible to people living with dementia and their families. Slow looking tours are a journey of discovery shared by participants, their family members or carers and the facilitators at heritage sites. These activities can provide a path to connect with a person's heritage and culture through play and freedom of expression. Even where cognitive decline is present, creative artistic activities are still important and meaningful.

Slow looking tours and art making activities are a unique opportunity for people living with dementia and their family members to reset the relationship from patient/carer back to family members enjoying a playful activity together. They can participate in cultural life together.

Art making activities encourage personal expression through the creation of personal artworks. Artistic creativity improves social engagement and personal confidence. In some cases, the channel of emotional processing during an art activity can compensate for the loss of other abilities.

The benefits of these activities include: assisting people with communication skills, feelings of social inclusion and improving their quality of life.

Castletown House,
Co Kildare, Ireland.

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The ideas that have informed this Learning Scenario

Aims:

- A feeling of 'being in the moment' with heritage and art.
- A sense of happiness that comes when people engage with heritage, culture and art.
- An opportunity to engage all the senses and connect on an emotional level.
- An opportunity to engage in a group activity.

Outcomes:

- Participants will have taken part in an engaging exploration of heritage and art works using slow looking techniques.
- They will have the opportunity to explore the ideas and express their views about the artefact or image during an art making session.
- They will form a connection to their heritage that will spark an interest in engaging further with heritage sites.

The strengths of using slow looking tours and arts activities:

No prior knowledge of history, heritage or art is required. The tour and activity focuses on curious enquiry and open discussion.

Art making activities are an open ended with no specific end goals. The focus is on the process of art making rather than the final output.

Participation in art making activities promotes psychological well-being and improved communication skills. Participants feel more socially engaged.

During the slow looking tours and art activities, participants have the opportunity to exchange ideas with guide staff, other participants and carers.

Play is at the heart of human activity. It is does not mean we treat people living with dementia like children. But rather that we deploy play as a way to find new paths to personal engagement with heritage.

As participants play with the art materials, they can explore new potentials for expression, meaning making and making connections in their everyday lives. Participants have their senses and emotions fully engaged.

Art making activities draw on residual artistic abilities, even where cognitive impairment is present. It can be a way to reclaim the person behind the diagnosis.

Creating an image using collage technique promotes creativity and being in the moment with art. It is an opportunity to become engrossed in an activity and step away from the stresses of everyday life.

Participants are encouraged to bring their art home with them. This can be a moment to share the activity with friends and family and talk about what they have experienced. Where possible, offer participants the opportunity to bring additional art materials home as they may wish to continue the activity later.

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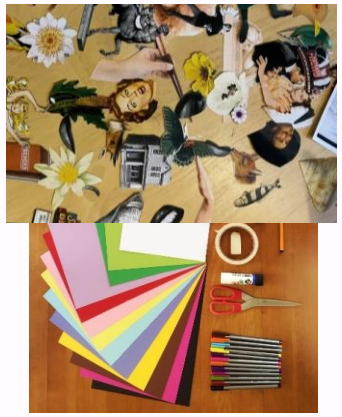
Summary of Tour and Activity

In this activity, participants will take part in a slow looking tour looking at either a painting or historical artefact. We also included a slow looking session at the Print Room in Castletown House as it refers specifically to the art making activity that follows.
The second part of the session is a collage activity. Participants will have a selection of cuts outs, some magazine pages, a range of coloured papers, glue stick and scissors.

The slow looking sessions are based on the Meet Me methodology developed by MOMA:
https://www.moma.org/visit/accessibility/meetme/

Lady Emily Fitzgerald
by Allen Ramsey (1765)
at Castletown House, Co. Kildare, Ireland



This piece was created by a facilitator who worked along side the participants.

The four elements of a slow looking tour are:
Observation – spend time just looking at the art or artefact.
Description – ask the group to describe what they are seeing, colours, shapes etc. Build a visual inventory of the image. Spend time asking deepening questions to elicit as comprehensive a description as possible.
Interpretation – weave the story of the piece through the description the group have posed. Drop in interesting facts or interpretations to stimulate the discussion.
Connection – pose a question for each person to answer that helps them connect to the piece.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_xqCcKWg94 IMMA video demonstration of Azure tour for people living with dementia.

Examples of deepening questions:

What is it that makes you say that?
What do you see that makes you say that?
Can you say a little more about that.
Would you like to tell me a little more.
What else do you see?
Anything else?
Use a gentle tone with the word ‘why’

Acknowledge all contributions using the person’s name.
For example: John sees the colour blue here and here (pointing out the places that he is referring to).

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Preparation for the tour and activity

Preparations:

Select the historical objects or artworks to be used during the tour. Consider their location in terms of space for chairs, distance to be walked and comfort for participants.

Prepare the slow looking tour using the Meet Me at MOMA guidelines.

Prepare the cut outs for the art activity. Select images of general interest as well as those that relate to the art or artefact being viewed. Purchase a range of white and coloured card in A3 size, glue sticks and scissors.

Contact all the participants in advance with the session details and location map. Let them know if they need warm clothing.

Print off copies of the photograph of the historical artefact or art work that the group will be looking at. These can be used during the slow looking session and given to the participants to take home.

Considerations:

It is helpful if other staff onsite are trained in dementia awareness as it is likely that they will be interacting with participants at the point of arrival or departure.

In deciding how many facilitators will be required for the session, keep in mind that you may need additional staff to assist the group moving through the heritage site.

How far will the participants be expected to walk during their visit? Consider the distances from the car park or public transport and the distances onsite. Leave time for the group to assemble before moving off to the site of the slow looking tour. Leave time for bathroom breaks.

The Print Room, Castletown House, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Some participants may have mobility issues. How will they move through the site, what are the floor surfaces, are there stairs or slopes and will they need the use of a lift?

Some of the participants will have visual or auditory issues. Some may have issues with depth perception or shaking hands. These are not reasons to exclude someone, but rather an opportunity to consider if any adaptions need to be made to include them as fully as possible.

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Setting up the tour and art making activity

Participants: This activity is suited to groups of up to 5 participants plus their carers or family members, a total of 10 people per group.

We partnered with **the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland** to recruit participants to the sessions. They announced the project on their Team up for Dementia database, in their newsletters and by word of mouth through their community care staff. Building relationships with professional staff working with people living with dementia works well in spreading the word about the sessions.

Resources:
The AIDA website:
www.artzheimer.eu

https://www.moma.org/visit/accessibility/meetme/practice/
MOMA Training resources for running dementia friendly art looking tours

https://imma.ie/learn-engage/art-and-ageing/armchair-azure/ IMMA Gallery, Ireland, tours and resources for running dementia friendly art tours

Set up the slow looking tour:
1. Participants should be seated during the slow looking tour. Set out the seats in a semi-circle around the object or art work paying attention to whether everyone can see the object and hear the facilitator. Chairs should have a back for safety and comfort.
2. Choose an art work or historical artefact that would be suitable for the session. It needs to be large enough to be clearly visible. It also needs to be distinct from other art works or artefacts in the surrounding area, so participants are clear about what they are looking at. A photograph or print of the artefact can be useful for participants.

Set up the art making session:
1. The studio space for the art making activity needs to be furnished with tables and chairs. Ideally, seat all participants around one large table, as this will assist with building a positive group dynamic and feelings of social inclusion.
2. Set out the art materials and cut outs (pre-cut), offering a good range of choices, but not too much so as to overwhelm the participants. Each person should have a blank piece of coloured card to work on, a glue stick and a scissors.

Staff requirements:
Between 3-4 facilitators trained in giving slow looking tours and conducting art making sessions for people living with dementia. Where the heritage site is complex to navigate, you may need additional staff.

Refreshments:
If you are offering refreshments during or after the session, plan how you will manage the space, whether people can have refreshments while they work and how to manage the transition from the social aspect of the session back to the activity.

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Running the Art Tour and Art Making session
The Session takes about 2 hours

Step by step guide:

1. Welcome the participants to the venue. Introduce yourself and ask the participants to wear name badges (staff will all be wearing name badges). Answer any initial questions people have.
2. When the group is assembled, lead them into the gallery. If the area is not sufficiently heated suggest that people keep their coats on. Ensure that everyone is sitting comfortably. Introduce yourself again and welcome everyone, giving them orientation information.
3. Start the slow looking art tour. If you have prepared printouts of the art or artefact hand them out at the outset. Use the Azure or Meet Me at MOMA methodology to ensure everyone is engaged and contributing to the discussion.
4. Immediately following the facilitated art tour, participants are brought to a well lit studio area with tables, chairs and art materials.
5. Introduce the activity to the group. Introduce the group to all the art materials. Make sure that they can all see a copy of the art works that were covered in the art tour.
6. Each participant is invited to select some cut outs, a glue stick and a large sheet of coloured paper. The selection of art materials should be within easy reach of everyone.
7. The facilitators should be present with the participants and the carers, engaging them as they work. The lead facilitator for the art activity should sit at the table with the participants, take part in the activity and act as a stimulus for discussion.
8. At the end of the session, each participant is encouraged to give their picture a title and say something about it to the group.
9. Where digital devices are used to photograph the participants work, permission must be sought before any photographs are taken. Consider whether all participants are comfortable with having their pictures recorded and understand what the images may be used for.
10. Where digital devices are used to create a gallery of the art produced, the participants should be introduced to the digital platform. They will also have to give consent to their art work being uploaded to the platform.
11. The participants would then be encouraged to take their personal art work home with them to show family and friends.

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